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**U.S. ATTORNEY, CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND
SACRAMENTO FBI OFFICE ANNOUNCE INDICTMENTS IN
INTERNET CHILD PORNOGRAPHY INVESTIGATION**

(SACRAMENTO) United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, and John Francis Pikus, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) today announced that a Sacramento federal grand jury has returned yet another indictment in a series of indictments expected from an investigation of child pornography trafficking on the Internet. The indictment charges Tim Weintraut of Las Vegas, Nevada, with 9 counts of receipt and distribution of child pornography, and is the third such indictment to result from an extensive investigation by the Sacramento Valley Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement (SAFE) Task Force, into online trading and distribution of child pornography. The SAFE Task Force is comprised of special agents from the California Attorney General's Office, the FBI, and prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Task Force also works closely with county prosecutors including those from the Sacramento, Placer, and El Dorado County District Attorney's offices.

"To those who would prey on our children, let there be no mistake: we will track you down and you will be prosecuted," said United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott.

"Through a collaborative effort between my office, the U.S. Attorneys and the FBI, we have the means necessary to identify, track and prosecute online predators," said Attorney General Lockyer. "We will continue to push forward, using every legal means available to take these criminals out of circulation and stop them from threatening our children."

"What we have learned from our past child exploitation investigations is that there is a correlation between traders of child pornography over the Internet and predators who hunt for children on the Internet, in the playgrounds, and at schools. Law enforcement must utilize all its assets, techniques, and knowledge in addressing this danger to our children. We are doing so through this SAFE Task Force. No matter what medium is used by a predator to entice, lure, or eventually kidnap a minor for immoral purpose, members of this Task Force will be utilizing all their skills and creativity to find them before they can harm a child," stated SAC John F. Pikus,

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Sacramento.

Nevada-based agents from the FBI arrested Tim Weintraut last week. He appeared before a United States Magistrate Judge in Sacramento earlier this week on the federal complaint, and was indicted today on four counts he received child pornography and five counts he distributed child pornography. The case will be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Sacramento. If convicted of the charges, Weintraut faces a five-year mandatory minimum and 20 year maximum term of imprisonment for each count.

Weintraut is the third individual indicted on child pornography charges stemming from an initial investigation of Jason Morgan, 26, of Chico. A superceding indictment was filed October 2, 2003, in the U.S. District Court in Sacramento, charging Morgan with four counts of soliciting child pornography via the Internet, and 7 counts of receiving and distributing child pornography. Morgan, who it's alleged contacted minors online and conversed with them about sexual matters, was also charged in one count of using an interstate facility to transmit information about a minor. He faces a possible 5 to 20 year sentence for the receipt and distribution charges, and a 15 to 30 year sentence for soliciting child pornography on the Internet.

John Palmer, 35, of Live Oak, was also indicted on October 2, 2003, on similar charges stemming from the investigation. Palmer faces a possible 5 to 20 year sentence for charges he received and distributed child pornography. Both Palmer and Morgan have been detained pending trial. The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The indictments originated from an eight-month investigation that began when Morgan contacted undercover agents with the Sacramento SAFE Task Force while they were monitoring online chat rooms frequented by individuals who trade or solicit illegal pictures depicting the sexual abuse of minors. During online correspondence with special agents, Morgan allegedly detailed his intent to trade in child pornography and have sexual relations with a minor. He also allegedly admitted to having sexual relations with a minor in the past. Morgan also faces charges filed by the Butte County District Attorney, which allege he engaged in unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 16 years of age.

During follow-up investigation by Task Force members it was learned that a suspect in this case may have had contact with numerous "at-risk" minors with the intent of possible exploitation. The Task Force is in the process of identifying these minors and their families to interview.

The SAFE Task Force specializes in pro-active investigations into the online trading and soliciting of child pornography, and in the investigation of cases involving the sexual exploitation of minors.

"While the exploitation of children is not a new crime, the advent of the Internet has greatly increased the ability of these predators to come in contact with minors," Lockyer said.

“The problem has become so prevalent and serious that the SAFE team is now making use of investigative techniques previously reserved for investigations of organized crime,” said U.S. Attorney Scott. Scott explained that the new provisions of the PROTECT (Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today) ACT, greatly enhance law enforcement’s ability to prosecute such criminals, due to the Act’s enhanced penalties for those convicted of such crimes, and the expansion of investigative options to crimes dealing with the sexual exploitation of children.

Lockyer noted online sexual predators often are tenacious, experienced and patient. They may spend hours online communicating with unsuspecting juveniles. They often spend weeks or longer trying to gain the trust of minors. The indictments of Palmer and Weintraut were sought because both were alleged to have engaged in heavy trading of child pornography with Morgan. In the case of Palmer and Morgan, each had expressed an interest in engaging in sexual conduct with minors. Investigators have identified minors they believe may have been contacted by Morgan for unlawful sexual contact. The investigation also uncovered more than 5,000 still images depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. More than 300 video files of such conduct were stored on the confiscated computers.

Agents with the SAFE Task Force will provide assistance to victims and their families. The investigation continues into the remaining traders and information will be placed in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) database for use by law enforcement agencies across the nation investigating cases of sexual exploitation of children.

Tips for parents to protect their children against online predators are attached. The Attorney General’s Crime and Violence Prevention Center website provides additional information for parents on protecting their children against online predators at <http://www.safestate.org>. Californians can also report illegal online activity regarding the sexual exploitation of children to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Tipline at 1-800-THE-LOST.

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